

thence it goes back to Marton by rail; but since motor-lorries have come into being there are no less than four running from Wanganui to Marton carrying a very large proportion of goods in competition with the Railway Department. My opinion is that if the Railway Department had a line running under their own control from Foxton to Marton, great quantities of this merchandise, instead of being shipped to Wanganui and coming back, would be sent direct to Foxton and distributed to Marton. I think the Railway Department is losing a good deal of traffic on that account.

4. You will observe that if permission were given to extend the train so as to connect with the Government line at Marton, the Government would still control the line, because they control the section from Himatangi to Foxton?—Yes.

5. And if they supply the rolling-stock they still retain control of the line?—Yes.

6. I judge from what has been said in a memorandum read by Mr. Myers that it will be suggested that the duplication of the line is not an immediate possibility: what have you to say about that?—Of course, I am only speaking my own personal opinion, and that is that within five years from now the present railway-line will have to be duplicated. The erection of several new freezing-works between Palmerston and Greatford and the running of several stock-trains, with the extension of population—for this Dominion will have an enormous expansion of population after the war—will involve, to my mind, certainly within five years the duplication of that line.

7. It is suggested that the purposes of duplication may be well served by the provision of numerous and somewhat extensive sidings?—Well, of course, when you have a railway system with fast expresses and fast express goods, which must come by-and-by, every time you put in a siding you involve a certain delay, especially with trains that have to be shunted on to the siding to wait whilst other trains pass. Then, for the safety of the public, there is no doubt that the duplication of the line is much safer for the running of a large number of trains without side-tracking.

8. Could you give an illustration with regard to deviation for shortening distances in England?—Yes. I know one particular case which is almost parallel with this: in connection with the Great Western Railway. They used to run all expresses and mail-trains from Exeter through Bristol and Bath to London. They also ran through Somerset, passing through Westbury, Trowbridge, and Chippenham. A few years ago, owing to pressure of public traffic and public opinion, and also in order to shorten the journey to London, they were forced to run a line twenty-one miles in length, which is almost exactly similar to the loop we are now proposing for shortening the Main Trunk line, instead of which the line went round in a curve. The company ran straight from Westbury to Savernake through Lavington. The effect of the traffic was the quickening of the journey to London by quite an appreciable time; but the peculiar point was that neither Trowbridge nor Chippenham suffered in the least by the shortening of the line for the main expresses and main express goods-trains. May I now refer to the Wairarapa line. Before the Government acquired the Manawatu Railway the whole of the express trains to Napier went round via Masterton to Napier. When the Manawatu line was acquired by the Government the express and mail trains were taken off and sent via the Manawatu district. Masterton does not see them, and yet Masterton has not gone back in value to the least degree.

9. *The Chairman.*] There is this distinction: you forget that Palmerston is the junction for these east coast lines, and if you are to give the east coast people the same facilities you must have special trains leaving the Palmerston Junction for Levin and Marton to catch the expresses?—But, your Honour, the Railway Department are running special trains from Wanganui to connect with the Main Trunk express.

10. The Wanganui people complain that special trains are not run?—They have one that goes to meet the express in the afternoon, and another to meet the morning Main Trunk express. The train arrives at 5.15 from Wanganui and the express goes on from Marton at 5.30.

11. I came from New Plymouth a few days ago and had to wait at Marton for two hours to connect with the express?—That would be the case from New Plymouth, but not from Wanganui, which I was quoting.

*Mr. Myers:* No questions.

RICHARD WILLIAM McVILLY further examined. (No. 34.)

1. *Mr. Sherrett.*] You might tell us the average working cost of the New Zealand railways per train-mile?—6s. 2½d., I think.

2. And adding interest upon the thirty millions of money invested would make it 10s. 2d.?—I have not worked it out.

3. Could you tell the Commission the total working cost of the section from Marton to Palmerston or Marton to Levin?—No, I could not. The working cost is not kept in sections. The whole of the North Island system is treated as one section, under the heading of "North Main Trunk and Branches."

4. So it is impossible for you to supply the operative cost of any section in the North Island?—We cannot supply that, no.

5. Nor could you give me, therefore, the revenue produced by the section or to be attributed to the section Marton to Palmerston, or Marton to Levin?—Yes, we could give that. It requires addition.

6. You put in a return headed "Return of Traffic carried on Main Line between Levin and Marton" [Return put in—Exhibit 14]?—Yes, that is so.